



### **3.0 BACKGROUND AND RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:**

The Nature Challenge involves ten effective ways that citizens, municipalities, and business organizations can help conserve nature and improve our quality of life. The challenge is not a competition but is an ongoing commitment to lessen our impact on the natural environment. The challenge is to select at least three measures from a list of ten, such as reducing home energy use, supporting alternative transportation, and buying locally grown and produced food.

Promoting and participating in the Nature Challenge supports the following long and short term goals in the city's strategic plan under *Burlington...a liveable community*:

#### ***Long Term Goal:***

*The city will be a leader in making a high level of environmental performance one of the primary goals of its policies, programs and operations, and in the actions of its citizens, to provide the highest quality of life for all.*

#### ***3-year Goals:***

- 2.2 To enhance the quality of air, land, water and the city's natural heritage.*
- 2.3 To increase citizen and business awareness and participation in improving the environment.*

### **4.0 DISCUSSION:**

Participation in the Nature Challenge involves selecting three of the following ten steps of sustainability and registering on the David Suzuki Foundation website:

#### **1. Reduce home energy use by 10%**

A more energy-efficient home lowers utility bills and reduces your impact on the environment. Heating accounts for nearly 60 per cent of energy use in the average Canadian home.

#### **2. Choose an energy-efficient home and appliances**

R-2000 homes use 30 percent less energy than standard homes. Modern appliances save more energy than older ones. New refrigerators, for example, use 40 per cent less energy than models made just 10 years ago.

#### **3. Avoid using pesticides**

Small children and pets can be vulnerable to the use of chemical pesticides.

#### **4. Eat meat-free meals one day per week**

The production and processing of grains requires far less water and land than does meat.

**5. Buy locally grown and produced food**

Buying locally reduces greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants from food transportation. One study estimates that the average meal travels 2400 km (1500 miles) from the field to your table.

**6. Choose a fuel-efficient vehicle**

Consider a hybrid vehicle, or a modern fuel efficient station wagon, which can still transport members of the soccer team.

**7. Walk, bike, carpool or take transit**

Researchers in California found the air we breathe inside our cars can be up to 10 times more polluted than the air outside.

**8. Choose a home close to work or school**

A convenient place to live reduces the amount you drive, which means you'll lower your emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants. You'll also have more time to spend on things you care about.

**9. Support alternative transportation**

More alternatives to the car mean less pollution, gridlock and urban sprawl.

**10. Learn more and share with others**

By working together we can inspire elected leaders to incorporate environmental conservation into public policy. A healthier environment isn't possible unless we all get involved.

Participation by municipalities in the Nature Challenge can be by individuals, a specific department or agency, or the city as a whole. If the city registers as a 'place of work', we can track the participation rate by city employees. Even if individuals or groups are already doing many of the actions listed in the challenge, they are encouraged to register to send a message publicly of their commitment to institute positive change.

**City Initiatives:**

Staff have advised the David Suzuki Foundation that the city has an Environmental Management Team that reviews city operations and services, making recommendations for improvements through its Environmental Management Plan. The city has implemented many actions to reduce its impact on the environment and additional opportunities for improvement continue to be identified. A summary of environmental actions include:

**Energy reduction:**

*Recent energy efficient lighting upgrades have been made in parts of City Hall, including the council chambers, Engineering, and ITS. A solar sensor has been installed in the parking garage to reduce the use of lights during brighter conditions. A variety of energy efficient measures have been installed in other facilities, including motion detectors, heat recovery*

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*systems, and updated building management systems. Next steps will include developing an energy management plan and tracking improvements in energy conservation.*

*Council has approved a subsidy for local residents planning to have an energy audit completed for their homes. Staff are also working closely with Burlington Hydro to identify additional energy conservation measures for home owners and businesses.*

### **Transportation alternatives:**

*The city runs a viable transit operation, providing residents with an alternative to using private vehicles. Staff continue to look at opportunities to promote active transportation by increasing cycling/pedestrian paths and participating in special events, such as the annual Commuter Challenge.*

### **Promoting sustainable development**

*Infill development is encouraged by the city to achieve intensification versus sprawl, helping to protect the urban/rural boundary. Mixed-use centres are identified in the city's Official Plan to support sustainable and active modes of transportation, reducing the need for auto transportation.*

### **Minimal use of pesticides**

*The city has essentially eliminated the use of pesticides on public property with the exception of minimal use at Tyandaga Golf Course, the bowling green, and Greenwood Cemetery, and in situations of pest infestations, including poison ivy. Staff also work closely with the regional Partners for Naturally Green to raise public awareness of the importance of reducing the use of pesticides and implementing preventative lawn care measures.*

### **Use of fuel efficient vehicles**

*The city currently leases three hybrid vehicles as part of its fleet and ten new fuel efficient buses were added to the transit fleet in 2003 to replace vehicles that ranged from 21 to 25 years. As well, premium low sulphur diesel fuel is utilized and since the 2003, the city has been utilizing bio-diesel fuel for off-road, unlicensed equipment during the smog season to reduce emissions.*

### **Promoting sustainable practices**

*Staff continue to work with various groups and agencies to raise public awareness and undertake actions to achieve a sustainable community, including the GTA Clean Air Council, the Halton Partners for Clean Air, the Bay Area Restoration Council (BARC) and Implementation Team (BAIT), the Watershed Planning Network, and Partners for Naturally Green. The city also has a Sustainable Development Committee that is very active in the community.*

## **5.0 FINANCIAL MATTERS:**

There is no cost for registration to participate in the Nature Challenge. Any costs associated with promoting the Nature Challenge will be covered by the Environment Section's current budget.

## **6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS:**

Environmental matters related to this report are addressed in Section 4 above.

**7.0 COMMUNICATION MATTERS:**

Staff will promote the Nature Challenge internally through the FOCUS newsletter and COBNet. EMT staff will work with Corporate Communications staff to further promote the challenge on a community wide basis, using such vehicles as the city's website, the Environmental Corner section of City Update, City Talk, and media releases.

**8.0 CONCLUSION:**

Given the city's commitment to environmental sustainability and continuous improvement in its operations, it is a logical step to register the city's participation in the Nature Challenge. By registering in the challenge, the city can help publicly promote the program as well as the city's accomplishments through a well-respected environmental foundation.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Robichaud  
Sr. Environmental Co-ordinator

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**Appendices:**

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<b>Staff / Others Consulted:</b>	Name	Telephone
	Environmental Management Team Sustainable Development Committee	

<b>Notifications:</b>	Name	Mailing or E-mail Address

**Special Instructions:**

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